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Title : Statement regarding status of implementation of recommendations contained in the 7th report of Standing Committee on External Affairs.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED): Sir, I am making this statement on the status of implementation of recommendations contained in the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs in pursuance of the Direction 73A of the hon. Speaker, Lok Sabha.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs examined the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 2005-06 and presented its Seventh Report to the Lok Sabha on April 26, 2005. The Report included 50 recommendations. I am happy to note that the Government's response to 31 recommendations has been accepted by the Committee; in 4 other cases too, the Committee is satisfied and has decided not to pursue those matters further. We are grateful to the Committee for its kind words of appreciation for numerous initiatives taken by the Government to further improve and strengthen our relations with the neighbouring and other countries[bru18].

The Committee has made recommendations asking us to draw a long term plan for construction of Government-owned office and residential buildings for our diplomatic missions, passport offices and their staff, reorientation of our publicity work, filling up of vacant posts, regularization of temporary posts in passport offices, opening of new passport offices, setting up of Advisory Committees and opening of new regional offices of ICCR and constitution of the governing body of ICWA and expedite the construction of Videsh Bhawan.

* Placed in Library, See No. LT 3943/2006

I am happy to inform you that the foundation stone to start the construction of the Videsh Bhawan was laid by the hon. Prime Minister on February 14, 2006. We have made progress in acquisition/construction of office/residential buildings for our missions abroad and passport offices in India. Our External Publicity Division is now producing both country and issue-specific documentaries and other publicity material to help our missions in projecting the achievements of our country in various fields. The Investment and Trade Promotion Division of the Ministry has produced brochures, CD-ROMs, films and took out supplements in leading international economic publications like Euro and Asia Money to promote and project India as a favourable investment destination.

12.11 hrs. (Mr. Deputy-Speaker *in the Chair*)

An Indian Cultural Centre has become operational in Tokyo since December 2005. We are making earnest efforts to implement the other recommendations made by the Committee. But in certain cases where the action is contingent upon the prevailing situation in foreign countries, i.e. availability of suitable land or buildings for accommodation of our missions abroad, we are constrained by the local factors. With such imponderables in our favour, I wish to assure this House that the MEA will make every effort to do a much better job next time in implementing rest of the Committee's recommendations.

The present status of implementation of the recommendations is detailed in the Annexure, which is laid on the Table of the House. I would not like to take the valuable time of the House to read out all the contents, but would request that these may be considered as read.